
PROGRESS REPORT—2012

Prepared by:

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Summary of project activities in 2012:

1. The Arctic Studies Center hosted a successful St. Lawrence Island Yup'ik language workshop at the Anchorage Museum (Jan. 23-27, 2012), with Chris Koonooka (Bering Straits School District), Ralph Apatiki, Sr., John Apassingok, Lydia Apatiki, Elaine Kingeekuk, Angela Larson, Merlin Koonooka, Vera Metcalf, and Jonella Larson. The participants were all from St. Lawrence Island (Gambell and Savoonga) and speak the same dialect. More than 20 hours of culturally-rich Yupik discussion about 25 cultural heritage objects from the Smithsonian collection were sound-recorded and videotaped with two cameras. Extensive arrangements (travel, contracts, museum staff coordination) were required to organize the session.
2. With the assistance of Chris Koonooka and UAA graduate film intern Zack Lassiter, discussion segments were selected and edited in FinalCut Pro to produce 12 language and culture teaching films which focus on: 1. ceremonial gut parka; 2. birdskin parka; 3. three styles of boots; 4. bird net; 5. Bolas; 6. walrus harpoon; 7. whaling harpoon; 8. ceremonial headdress; 9. bird game; 10. drum; 11. dance gloves; and 12. Boat sled. Chris Koonooka transcribed and translated the dialogs for use in the films, which are captioned in Yupik and English. The films (each 3-6 minutes long) make extensive use of archival still and moving images to illustrate the elders' discussions.
3. Chris Koonooka has begun preparing text (vocabularies, grammar lessons, discussion questions) for the teacher's guide and student workbooks which will accompany the DVDs for us in the classroom. Lauren Shutt, Anchorage education adviser, will assist with design, writing, and formatting of the printed materials.
4. Substantial progress was made toward producing 12 teaching films from the Iñupiaq language workshop that was held in Jan. 2011. The workshop discussions were held in five different dialects, which has required the subsequent services of three different translator-transcribers: Bernadette Alvanna-Stimpfle (for Bering Strait, King Island dialects), Lorena Williams (Kotzebue dialect), and Edna McLean (North Slope and Anaktuvuk Pass dialects). Transcribed dialogues (all dialects) for six films were completed in 2012 and are currently being

checked and edited by Larry Kaplan at the Alaska Native Language Center. Dialog selections for the other six planned films have been made and sent to the translators.

5. Aron Crowell gave a public presentation on the project during the Beringia Days conference in Nome, September 9-10, 2011.

Deliverables submitted in addition to progress report: (only if required in agreement)

- Arctic Studies Center 2012 newsletter with article "St. Lawrence Island Yup'ik Language Workshop"

Obstacles or delays encountered:

Difficulties and delays with the Iñupiaq component of the project have stemmed from the necessity of finding and engaging multiple translators who are fluent in particular dialects as well as expert in writing these dialects in the accepted orthography. Two translators who accepted contracts subsequently dropped out when they did not actually have time, or had technical difficulties in working with the audio files and computer-based transcription set-up. Educators Jana Harcharek and Bernadette Alvanna-Stimpfle have had little time to assist with the project so far and have been difficult to engage. The Iñupiaq part of the project continues to move forward but has fallen behind the St. Lawrence island Yupik component.

In retrospect, trying to work with multiple Iñupiaq dialects during the same sessions was less than ideal and has made post-production far more complex. In addition we are not completely happy with the video and sound for the Iñupiaq session recordings, as compared to the excellent quality of the Yupik sessions. The latter benefitted from experience gained and lessons learned from the Iñupiaq sessions. This type of learning curve has to be expected in an experimental/pilot project. The Iñupiaq material is certainly usable and to an extent correctable in editing, but overall production values of the final films will probably be lower.

Changes to the workplan or project timeframe?:

Not yet known; the Yupik material is on track for on-time completion but it is possible that the Iñupiaq deliverables will be delayed.

Next steps:

The 12 Yupik films will be programmed onto a menu-select DVD and reproduced at ASC. We will continue to work with Chris Koonooka and Lauren Shutt to produce the final Yupik text materials (teacher guide, student workbooks).

UAF film intern Sarah Vetcher will edit at least the first six Iñupiaq films in FinalCut Pro during Feb – April, 2013. We will continue working on translations and transcriptions for the remaining six videos. We expect that Jana Harcharek, Bernadette Alvanna-Stimpfle, and Lauren Shutt will assist in preparation of the classroom lessons and teacher's guide, as they have agreed, although the time frame is not yet certain.